

# World Tribune

No. 3132

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

MARCH 28, 1997

## INSIDE THIS WEEK

### 5 HISTORY

'The New Human Revolution,' vol. 5, chapter 4, parts 30-35.

### 7 WOMEN

Debut of the women's division's new quarterly pages.

### 9 DISCUSSION ON YOUTH

The meaning of work.

### 12 PROFILE

Three brothers conquer Las Vegas with their band, Forward Motion.

### 13 STUDY

Proclamation of the Daishonin's Buddhism — April 28.

### 14 MUSIC CORPS

Experiences of Hawaii's Fife and Drum Corps and Brass Band.

### 16 WORLDVIEW

Anthropologist Adrienne Zihlman, an expert on female evolution.

## Friendships Bloom in Preparations for Women's Meetings

Ananda, one of Shakyamuni's disciples: "It seems to me that by having good friends and advancing together with them one has already halfway attained the Buddha way. Is this way of thinking correct?"

Shakyamuni: "Ananda, this way of thinking is not correct. Having good friends and advancing together with them constitutes not half the Buddha way but all of the Buddha way."

By LESLIE WINES

NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

This year women's division members were encouraged to approach their meetings commemorating Feb. 27, the annual SGI-USA Women's Day, just a bit differently. In a January *World Tribune* interview, SGI-USA Women's Division Chief Wendy Clark asked women not to obsess over elaborate details of extravaganza-style meetings, but to give attention to the warm

encounters between members and friends that took place before the big events.

And so, in city after city throughout the country, women found themselves focusing on their friendships.

"At the beginning of our chapter-level planning meeting, we passed out Mrs. Clark's 'Enjoying the Process' interview," recalls Harriett Harris, the women's division leader of East Point District in Atlanta. "We must have underlined the phrases *home visit* and *human connection* five times apiece. The women all agreed that what will last long after the meeting are the connections we built with each other."

For Janice Jacob, the women's division leader of U.N. Chapter in Manhattan, the spirit of friendship was crystallized in a unique experience that took place as she and other members produced booklets with pressed

PLEASE SEE WOMEN, 4



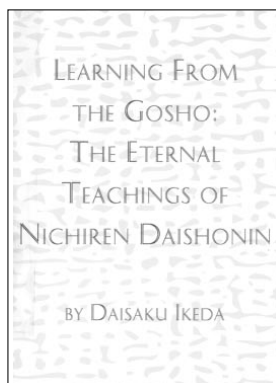
Nashville Headquarters women after their commemorative meeting, in which they incorporated appreciation for pioneer members' efforts.

## 'Learning From the Gosho' Available Soon

The popular series "Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin" by SGI President Ikeda has just been compiled and published in a convenient paperback edition.

*Learning From the Gosho* contains innumerable insights into the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, as expressed in his personal writings to many of his followers. In addition to commentaries on such familiar letters as "The Opening of the Eyes," "Happiness in This World" and "The One Essential Phrase," Mr. Ikeda explains significant passages from letters not yet found in the *Major Writings* series, including "Gift of an Unlined Robe," "The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed By All Buddhas of Past, Present and Future," "A Letter of Condolence" and others.

Among the many important



points made is the following regarding "Letter to the Mother of Oto Gozen":

Spirit means inner state of life, or one's heart. It decides what we devote our lives to. It is the fundamental prayer on which we base our existence. A person's spirit is invisible but becomes manifest at

a crucial moment. Not only that, it also controls everything about a person, each moment of every day — it is the fundamental determinant of one's life.

The Keron Sutra says, "The heart is like a skilled painter." Like a great painter, the heart freely creates representations of all things. One's heart is the designer, the painter, the sculptor and the architect of his or her being.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai cites this sutra passage in explaining the doctrine of a life-moment possessing three thousand realms. He uses the image of a great painter to explain that the heart manifests in the three thousand realms of all phenomena.

It is our spirit, our life-moment, that counts. Our spirit is our hopes, our prayers. And it can also be identified with the subconscious.

"What kind of future do I envision?" we may ask ourselves.

"What kind of self am I trying to develop? What do I want to accomplish in my life?" We should paint this vision of our lives in our hearts as specifically as possible. This "painting" becomes the design for our future. The power of the heart enables us to actually execute a wonderful masterpiece in accordance with that design. This is the doctrine of a life-moment possessing three thousand realms.

*Learning From the Gosho* will soon be available at all SGI-USA bookstores. Price: \$5.00.

### First Annual Essay Contest To Be Held

See p. 2 for details.

DATED MATERIAL: PLEASE DELIVER BY ISSUE DATE

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401  
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525 Wilshire Blvd.  
Santa Monica, CA 90401-1467

# VOICES

## What's the most crucial aspect of human revolution you've accomplished in your practice?

Members from Boston Joint Territory respond:



I'm tempted to say that I've already achieved enlightenment. However, I have, at times, had to ask myself if Nichiren Daishonin would roll his window down and holler at someone for cutting him off in traffic or pretend to not be home when an SGI member was at the door for a home visit! This is not who I am but is most certainly who I was several struggle-filled years ago. I'm pleased about no longer being that person but am more proud of actually looking forward to and believing that I have a wonderful future.

— ISHARA S. SMITH, Boston



For me, it has been realizing that every day that I don't advance I slide back. Advancing every day is difficult. If I don't try better in the things I do, I become complacent and satisfied with my environment (akin to the kankucho bird who always freezes at night because he was lax and enjoyed the warm weather during the day). That is sliding back. My ongoing revolution has been to make each day another opportunity to advance. It is this constant struggle that I consider my human revolution.

— BRYSON KIDO, Boston



As Gandhi said, "We must be the change we wish to see in the world." I've learned that I must be the change I wish to see in my environment and that no one and nothing can defeat me in this mission, except me and my doubt. I didn't always know if I could or would fight for my own and others' happiness, no matter what. Now,

with the inspiration and encouragement of SGI President Ikeda and my friends in faith, I know that I always can and always will.

— JULIA RILEY, Newton Centre, Mass.



It's more clear to me now that what you do and fight for every day is deeply connected to your larger mission as a human being in the world. Your dreams can never be too lofty. And the level at which you take responsibility and action toward achieving them is where daily life comes in. To make art that can inspire people,

you've got to be an inspiring person with rock solid conviction. Of course, this is very difficult. But if you're struggling, you're winning!

— CLAUDIA HEIMAN, Cambridge, Mass.



I heard a study presentation in Tokyo on the two kinds of Bodhisattvas. The lecturer said pre-Lotus Sutra Bodhisattvas practiced for others in order to attain their own happiness. I thought, "Yeah, me too." Bodhisattvas of the Lotus Sutra, however, practice for others without regard for their own happiness. At that moment, I realized that I needed to change my attitude toward practicing for others. I think the ability to change such things is what human revolution is all about.

— GEOFF WESTROPP, Boston

## ANNOUNCING

# The 1st Annual 'World Tribune' Essay Contest

**THEME:** *Human Diversity*  
**CATEGORIES:** *Elementary School  
Junior High School  
High School  
College/University  
Open (All Ages)*

The World Tribune invites all members to share their thoughts on one of the most important subjects of our day: human diversity. There are so many different kinds of people in our country. Whether we differ in our race, our gender, our size, our background or our sexual orientation, we all share one thing: We are all human. What joys have you experienced in celebrating this diversity? What have you learned about yourself when you've met someone different from you? What prejudices have you faced? What needs to change in ourselves and in our country so we can rise above prejudice and discrimination?

We are looking for short, personal essays no more than 750 words long addressing these questions and any other ideas you have on human diversity. A special committee will judge the essays on the quality of writing as well as on clarity and originality. The top three finishers in each category will have their essays published in the World Tribune. Plaques and other non-cash prizes will be awarded to the top-three finishers.

**To Enter:** Send your essay (double-spaced, typed) to "Essay Contest," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401. Indicate which category you are entering. Only one entry per person. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope. All essays become the property of the World Tribune. Any essays not double-spaced and typed or exceeding 750 words will not be considered.

**DEADLINE: JUNE 30, 1997**

## World Tribune

(ISSN-0049-8165)

The World Tribune (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401; (310) 451-8811; FAX (310) 260-8910. E-mail: SokaNews@aol.com. Subscriptions Office: (800) 835-4558; FAX (310) 260-8970; E-mail: SGI SUBS@aol.com.

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA, and at additional mailing offices.

Subscription Rates (subject to state taxes) \$15 for Three Months; \$28 for Six Months; \$50 for One Year; \$85 for Two Years; \$110 for Three Years.

Printed on 100% recycled paper

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**WORLD TRIBUNE  
MAILBOX**

**'What Is Love?'**

In response to SGI President Ikeda's dialogue "What is Love?" (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*) I'd like to offer the following commentary. While the notions and ideals surrounding love are indeed a universal aspect of life that has touched each and every one of us, I was a bit concerned regarding two perspectives that the discussion offered.

The first was it seemed that the article's slant was written more for the Japanese high school membership than it was for the United States' or other parts of the world's membership. This is not to say that there was no merit in the angle from which the article was written; there was...

What was of more of a concern for me regarding the article's slant was how it seemed to be somewhat biased against men. Specifically, there was the quote: "Many young women prove extremely vulnerable to the insistent advances of the opposite sex. They act as though stunned and lose their ability to make calm, rational decisions. It is precisely for this reason that young women must develop inner strength and self-respect. Since they are the ones who most often get hurt, they have every right to assert their dignity and look after their welfare. And if the young man in question does not respect this right, then he isn't worth being with."

Doesn't the same thing apply for men? Men too get hurt in their relationships with women. Who's to say "that they [women] are the ones who most often get hurt"? While there's no denying the importance of the issues that women face, is there any less significance in the issues that men face? I see the concerns, trials, perspectives and what men go through in general regarding love, relationships and their interactions with women as having the same significance. If we're all equal, aren't the issues that we face of equal value?

Ultimately, isn't what's most important in all of this that we all gain a greater sensitivity and understanding about people in general, be we man or woman, so that we can develop our Bodhisattva nature?

I do not want to diminish the significance of any issue. However, I feel that such gender-biased statements create greater misunderstanding between the sexes and further the rift between men and women in general.

— JOHN S. RAJESKI, Berkeley, Calif.

**Value From Tragedy**

I can't recall ever having been so moved by an experience (Feb. 28, "At the Crossroads of Destiny"). Joe and Donna underwent what is undoubtedly every parent's worst nightmare, facing it with such thoughtfulness, courage and determination — from beginning to end. I had to stop to wipe away tears repeatedly while reading their experience, yet I was profoundly encouraged to follow their example to fight to create value where it would seem only tragedy exists. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, Joe and Donna, for sharing your lives, and Travis' brief but victorious one, with all of us readers.

— GINA JONES, Riverside, Calif.

*Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.*

*In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune. Because of volume, not all letters can be printed, but they are all read. All letters are subject to condensation.*

*Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Send letters to "Mailbox," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401; or via America Online (SokaNews).*

**Frank Guidance Leads to New Attitude**

**PERSPECTIVE**

**By HILDA GRAY**  
BOSTON

Somewhat obsessive about paying for my son Kevin's college tuition, a few months ago I was working full time in a bank and part time at an Internet news service from 8:00 at night until about 1:30 every morning. This left very little time for chanting, faith activities or sleep. I was so tired that I sometimes literally felt like I was going to fall over.

It seemed at the time that SGI President Ikeda's guidance constantly emphasized the importance of getting enough rest. Every time I would read something like this, I would tell myself that I had to change my situation. It became clear that I would have to cut back on my work hours, but I couldn't decide which job to give up. Leaving either one would have cut my income in half.

I went to a conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center with the idea that I would finally have the time to chant, think about my life, and make some decisions to get it back in control. I felt it would be the perfect place to refresh my practice.

My leaders had encouraged me to seek guidance while there. I did really want to take advantage of this opportunity, and I thought I would simply ask which job I should quit. I naively felt that from the leader's enlightened viewpoint he would clearly see what I needed to do, and would tell me.

That's exactly what happened — but not in the way I expected.

I took full advantage of my time with the leader and poured out the whole history of my practice. I told him how I began chanting 25 years ago and how my first big benefit was the birth

of my son. I explained how this profound philosophy and the support of my SGI leaders and friends had made my mother's illness and death and my recent battle with breast cancer both opportunities for growth and victory. And then I told him how I felt my life was out of control now and how I hardly had time to chant. I told him I really wanted to support my members but communication was suffering because I had no time.

I thought he would tell me how admirable it was that I was

treasures of the heart.

I told him: "I can't believe how you're talking to me. Nobody has ever spoken to me like this!" And nobody ever had. I wasn't mad or negative; I was just astonished.

This guidance affected me so deeply that I was actually shaking as I left the cafeteria. But I determined to chant exclusively for the treasures of the heart and to chant more daimoku despite my schedule. I started by using my spare time in Florida to chant extra daimoku.

When I came home I continued to chant exclusively for the treasures of the heart, and by the following Sunday I had decided to quit my bank job. Even though I loved this job, I knew I was not using my experience and capabilities — and I was definitely not making the money I needed. I told my manager at the bank that I intended to resign. I felt confident about my decision and ready to find a more appropriate situation. Two days later, however, I received a call from the bank's regional vice president. He



Photo by BERNARD R. SPIEGEL

Hilda Gray

working so hard for my son's education, and that I was clearly doing my best. But he definitely didn't say that.

He was extremely clear and direct, but also compassionate. He blew my socks off! He said: "I can see you're a capable person, but you're not using your capabilities. You're like a beautiful car, a '97 Rolls Royce, but you have no gas."

He said that I should chant for the treasures of the heart. He said if I chanted more daimoku and really chanted to develop the treasures of the heart and really cared about my members, I would develop the wisdom to make the right decisions about my life. He said I was concentrating on the treasures of the storehouse and the treasures of the body, but they would come if I chanted sincerely for the

offered me an instant and very large raise, plus the promise of a promotion in January, with another substantial pay increase.

I have now quit my evening job, which is probably the one I should have quit in the first place. By chanting for the treasures of the heart I have taken control of my life and have the confidence to take action based on faith. I had decided to quit my bank job because I was confident that I would get a better job that paid what I needed and that I liked just as much. And I got that job without having to leave the bank!

I'm still chanting exclusively for the treasures of the heart, with great appreciation for my experience at the Florida Nature and Culture Center and a deeper understanding of President Ikeda's compassion in providing us this facility.

**What Do You Think?**

*Please write to us and let us know your thoughts on the World Tribune. What articles do you like or don't like? Which types would you like to see more of, less of? Do you have ideas to make us better? Do you have questions you'd like answered? Would you like to get involved in your local area? We welcome all letters at: Mailbox, World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.*

## Friendships Key to Women's Meetings

WOMEN, FROM PAGE 1

flower jackets to give the meeting attendees as gifts. "At one point we just started singing rounds together," she recalls. "We sang over and over, 'Make new friends but keep the old / one is silver and the other gold.' After this experience, the meeting itself almost seemed like an anti-climax, although it was very important, too, in its way."

For Kayoko Gille, women's division leader of Salem Chapter in Salem, Ore., thoughts of friends meant especially her old friends. In early January, Kayoko found herself chanting about Mrs. Clark's "closing the gap" guidance and beginning to think about members no longer active in the organization. Some had been missing for more than 20 years; others had dropped out of sight in the early 1990s after the SGI-USA underwent dramatic organizational changes. But she was determined to see these friends at the commemorative meeting.

"I really wanted to close the gap those members were having with the organization," she recalls. "I chanted lots of daimoku that this meeting would be a fresh start for them. I decided to just call them directly and ask them to the planning meeting. I was so happy when 12 women turned up, including some we hadn't seen in years. The planning meeting had a special, light feeling. We spent a long time just giggling. And at the commemorative meeting, three women appeared each after having been absent for at least 20 years."

"I really expressed myself to these women," she says. "I said: 'Let's forget the past and do our human revolution together.'"

Mary Hollowell, the women's division leader of Manhattan's Diamond District, found that this year's emphasis on home visits renewed her understanding of the fundamental goal of the Daishonin's Buddhism: human happiness. "I re-

membered that this practice has such a simple purpose," she says. "We're only doing this to help other people become happy — and to become happy together with them."

For Joan Weisberger and other women's division members who practice in New Horizons District and live in Manhattan's East Harlem neighborhood, thoughts of friendship centered on one particular friend: Rita Peoples. It

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## SGI Centers in Singapore, Ghana To House Sanctuaries

By DAVE McNEILL

MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., March 5

A new SGI community center — with a sanctuary room — will soon open in Singapore, and plans are underway for a similar facility in Ghana, the Soka Gakkai's newspaper in Japan has announced.

According to the *Seikyo Shimbun* report, members in those countries felt compelled by local customs, which include a strong reliance on priests to conduct certain ceremonies, to request a priest and sanctuary of their own in order to better gain their society's understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Nichiren Shoshu's plans to build temples in those countries, and the confusion it might cause among the members, also motivated the local SGI organizations to request these new facilities.

Since 1991, when Nichiren Shoshu excommunicated the SGI, organizations of reformist priests who support the SGI have occasionally sent priests to various countries, including Ghana and Singapore. To staff these new buildings, the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu will dispatch two priests. The association was formed in 1992 when 10 young priests remonstrated against Nichiren Shoshu High Priest Nikken, calling for the Nichiren

Shoshu priesthood to return to the Daishonin's original spirit of selfless action and the equality of priest and layperson.

Yuhan Watanabe has been conducting services and ceremonies for members in Singapore and assisting members in Buddhist study there. "I firmly believe that the true mission of a priest is to dedicate his life to the service of SGI members, who are promoting kosen-rufu in exact accord with the original Buddha's intent," he says.

The SGI organization in Singapore, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, approved construction of the facility in January 1996. The building, which opens this month, is three-storied, with a sanctuary on the first floor, a community center on the second and various conference rooms and a Gohonzon room on the third.

The SGI organization in Ghana has recently approved the construction of a similar building in Accra, its capital, and set up a committee to discuss the details of the construction. Reformist priest Yusei Sugawara will be dispatched there.

In both countries, the priests will operate under the auspices of the local SGI organizations.

According to SGI-USA General Director Zaitso, there are no plans to build SGI sanctuaries in the United States, which has a long tradition of lay religious groups. MT



Metro Headquarters in Michigan.



Miami No. 2 Territory.

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## Expressions

### Sonnet to Spring (for Ruth)

Had I all the world to give, I would for you  
Set aside a perfumed field, a handpicked portion  
In tended bloom, tree and flower of every hue,  
Laid out in fanciful pattern, in artful proportion.  
Played with, turned this way, bent that,  
So the unheralded traveler, happening on this garden,  
Blazoned with its sweet pea and forget-me-nots  
Enwinding, would have his guarded heart unhardened.  
Then his armor, donned in 'necessity's sharp pinch,'  
Could fall to mealy earth, and unravel to its atoms,  
Regalia of the rude clash replaced with blooming tints;  
His herald, instead, your floreate pattern.

Since I haven't the world to parcel before me,  
On a blank field, here, I bear your fleur-de-lis.

— WILLIAM ROUTHIER, Boston

The final verdict in the Osaka Incident trial was to be handed down in court on Jan. 25. If Shin'ichi Yamamoto, the Soka Gakkai president, were found guilty, it would not only have serious consequences for him personally but would greatly impede the progress of kosen-rufu.

In light of the gravity of the situation, the top leaders were extremely anxious. But they were at a loss over what to do. Even the lawyers were uncertain about the outcome; when asked, not one could state unequivocally that President Yamamoto would be exonerated. With gloomy expressions, they would make some non-committal reply such as: "It's really hard to say. We have to be prepared for whatever outcome..."

As the day of the final court session neared, the Gakkai's top leaders became more and more taciturn. Shin'ichi was the only one who appeared to maintain his usual confidence and composure.

On Jan. 18 and 19, he attended the respective leaders meetings for the young men's and young women's divisions and urged the youth to make a powerful new start in the coming year. On Jan. 21, eight days before his departure to the Middle East, he visited the head temple.

Then, on the 23rd, he attended a meeting for Study Department professors. There the results of the promotional exams for assistant teachers and teachers of the Study Department held earlier that month were reviewed and the passing candidates determined, with 7,980 new teachers and 650 new assistant professors being appointed. Added to those who had passed the entrance exam — whose names had already been announced in the Jan. 22 extra edition of the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper — this brought the Study Department membership from a total of 40,000 to around 113,600 in one remarkable leap.

The following day, Jan. 24, Shin'ichi was scheduled to travel to Osaka for the final session of the trial on the 25th. After the Study Department meeting, all the top leaders came over to Shin'ichi and one of them said: "President Yamamoto, we've all prepared ourselves for the court's verdict the day after tomorrow. Even if, by chance, you should be found guilty and the Soka Gakkai bombarded with criticism, we are determined to make sure that not a single person is swayed."

Shin'ichi laughed: "What are you talking about? I am innocent. Even President Toda said, 'The presiding judge will understand.' Rest assured that I will be vindicated. There is no reason for an innocent person to be found guilty. Nichiren Daishonin stated, 'Reason will win over your lord' (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 238). In other words, truth will prevail over authority. Please look forward to the final verdict."

## The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 5, Chapter 4

# Lion

Translation of parts 30–35 of the 'Lion' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

My main concern at the moment," Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued, looking at the leaders, "is for the other defendants in the case who, due to overzealousness and ignorance of the election law, violated it by soliciting votes door to door. Breaking the law is definitely wrong and it certainly should be dealt with strictly to assure this does not happen. But when I think of these sincere members being judged guilty, my heart aches for them. Each one of them worked really hard out of an earnest desire to improve society and the state of Japanese politics.

"They have not bribed anyone. All they have done is ask people to vote, sharing their convictions and beliefs. Naturally, those who commit a crime have to pay the consequences, but these members were unjustly harassed by police and public prosecutors during the investigations. If they are pronounced guilty by the court, they will have to suffer again. When I think of this, it pains me deeply. That is why I implore you to sincerely encourage and support these members. While it is essential for the sake of kosen-rufu that I be exonerated, should any of these members have to go to prison my wish is that I could go in their place."

This was the first time the leaders had heard Shin'ichi share his true feelings on the matter. They were deeply moved by his selfless concern.

As scheduled, on the 24th Shin'ichi flew to Osaka and that evening attended both the Kansai Young Women's Division Leaders Meeting at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall and the Kansai Young Men's Division Leaders Meeting at the Amagasaki Municipal Sports Center.

The Nakanoshima Civic Hall was where the Osaka members had gathered to hold a huge protest rally on July 17, 1957, the day of Shin'ichi's release by the authorities from unjust detention. On that

occasion, Shin'ichi had called out from the rostrum:

"It is my firm belief that the Dai-Gohonzon is aware of everything. President Toda told us that the third of the three powerful enemies, false saints,<sup>1</sup> has appeared. However, convinced of the Daishonin's statement 'When great evil occurs, great good will follow' (MW-5, 161), I am determined to arouse strong faith and further advance the cause of kosen-rufu together with all of you.

"Let us undertake this task with the conviction that the True Law and those

young women's fears evaporated.

Shin'ichi didn't mention the trial at all in his speech. He announced that land had been purchased for the construction of a new community center in the western Yodogawa region, where Typhoon No. 18 had wreaked extensive damage the previous September. This fulfilled a promise he had made to the members upon visiting the area immediately after the disaster, hoping it would encourage them in their efforts to rebuild in the storm's aftermath.

He also announced plans for the construction of a new Headquarters Building in Kansai, which he lauded as an area of strategic importance to kosen-rufu. Shin'ichi recalled how he and the Kansai members had written a golden page in the history of their movement and urged the young women to make the Kansai organization a model for the entire Soka Gakkai.

He also voiced his hope that they would all persevere in faith with great confidence and conviction, pointing to the countless members who had clearly proven with their lives that faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was the key to attaining absolute happiness. He closed by calling on the young women to make the year ahead one of ceaseless advancement toward great happiness, without retreating in faith or being swayed in the slightest by anything.

It was a powerful speech. Many were confident that Shin'ichi would emerge victorious from court the following day. Through his example and demeanor, many learned what it meant to live with the undaunted courage of a lion king.

One of the young women present would later remark: "You'd expect someone waiting to be judged by the court to be wracked with anxiety. But Mr. Yamamoto was far more concerned about the typhoon victims and encouraging everyone by announcing a new community center. I was moved to tears by his



who strive tenaciously in faith, steadfastly upholding the Dai-Gohonzon, will definitely emerge victorious!"

This was Shin'ichi's proclamation of total victory.

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LION, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

The final verdict in the Osaka Incident trial was to be handed down in court on Jan. 25. If Shin'ichi Yamamoto, the Soka Gakkai president, were found guilty, it would not only have serious consequences for him personally but would greatly impede the progress of kosen-rufu.

In light of the gravity of the situation, the top leaders were extremely anxious. But they were at a loss over what to do. Even the lawyers were uncertain about the outcome; when asked, not one could state unequivocally that President Yamamoto would be exonerated. With gloomy expressions, they would make some noncommittal reply such as: "It's really hard to say. We have to be prepared for whatever outcome...."

As the day of the final court session neared, the Gakkai's top leaders became more and more taciturn. Shin'ichi was the only one who appeared to maintain his usual confidence and composure.

On Jan. 18 and 19, he attended the respective leaders meetings for the young men's and young women's divisions and urged the youth to make a powerful new start in the coming year. On Jan. 21, eight days before his departure to the Middle East, he visited the head temple.

Then, on the 23rd, he attended a meeting for Study Department professors. There the results of the promotional exams for assistant teachers and teachers of the Study Department held earlier that month were reviewed and the passing candidates determined, with 7,980 new teachers and 650 new assistant professors being appointed. Added to those who had passed the entrance exam — whose names had already been announced in the Jan. 22 extra edition of the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper — this brought the

Study Department membership from a total of 40,000 to around 113,600 in one remarkable leap.

The following day, Jan. 24, Shin'ichi was scheduled to travel to Osaka for the final session of the trial on the 25th. After the Study Department meeting, all the top leaders came over to Shin'ichi and one of them said: "President Yamamoto, we've all prepared ourselves for the court's verdict the day after tomorrow. Even if, by chance, you should be found guilty and the Soka Gakkai bombarded with criticism, we are determined to make sure that not a single person is swayed."

Shin'ichi laughed: "What are you talking about? I am innocent. Even President Toda said, 'The presiding judge will understand.' Rest assured that I will be vindicated. There is no reason for an innocent person to be found guilty. Nichiren Daishonin stated, 'Reason will win over your lord' (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 238). In other words, truth will prevail over authority. Please look forward to the final verdict."

My main concern at the moment," Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued, looking at the leaders, "is for the other defendants in the case who, due to overzealousness and ignorance of the election law, violated it by soliciting votes door to door. Breaking the law is definitely wrong and it certainly should be dealt with strictly to assure this does not happen. But when I think of these sincere members being judged guilty, my heart aches for them. Each one of them worked really hard out of an earnest desire to improve society and the state of Japanese politics.

"They have not bribed anyone. All they have done is ask people to vote, sharing their convictions and beliefs. Naturally, those who commit a crime have to pay the consequences, but these members were unjustly harassed by police and public prosecutors during the investigations. If they are pronounced guilty by the court, they will have to suffer again. When I think of this, it pains me deeply. That is why I implore you to sincerely encourage and support these members. While it is essential for the sake of kosen-rufu that I be exonerated, should any of these members have to go to prison my wish is that I could go in their place."

This was the first time the leaders had heard Shin'ichi share his true feelings on the matter. They were deeply moved by his selfless concern.

As scheduled, on the 24th Shin'ichi flew to Osaka and that evening attended both the Kansai Young Women's Division

Leaders Meeting at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall and the Kansai Young Men's Division Leaders Meeting at the Amagasaki Municipal Sports Center.

The Nakanoshima Civic Hall was where the Osaka members had gathered to hold a huge protest rally on July 17, 1957, the day of Shin'ichi's release by the authorities from unjust detention. On that occasion, Shin'ichi had called out from the rostrum:

"It is my firm belief that the Dai-Gohonzon is aware of everything. President Toda told us that the third of the three powerful enemies, false saints,<sup>1</sup>



has appeared. However, convinced of the Daishonin's statement 'When great evil occurs, great good will follow' (MW-5, 161), I am determined to arouse strong faith and further advance the cause of kosen-rufu together with all of you.

"Let us undertake this task with the conviction that the True Law and those who strive tenaciously in faith, steadfastly upholding the Dai-Gohonzon, will definitely emerge victorious!"

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As the car neared the Nakanoshima Civic Hall, Shin'ichi gazed out the window at the Dojima River. Flickering on the water's surface were the lights of the brick building that housed both the Osaka District Court, where he would appear the following morning to hear the judge's verdict, and the Osaka District Prosecutor's Office, where he had been subject to unjust interrogation.

The young men's and young women's division members gathered for their respective leaders meetings. While justly angered at the abuses of the prosecutor's office, the youth were also anxious about the outcome of the trial.

When Shin'ichi stepped to the rostrum at the young women's division

meeting in the Nakanoshima Civic Hall, thunderous applause erupted. Seeing him self-assured and confident as always, the young women's fears evaporated.

Shin'ichi didn't mention the trial at all in his speech. He announced that land had been purchased for the construction of a new community center in the western Yodogawa region, where Typhoon No. 18 had wreaked extensive damage the previous September. This fulfilled a promise he had made to the members upon visiting the area immediately after the disaster, hoping it would encourage them in their efforts to rebuild in the storm's aftermath.

He also announced plans for the construction of a new Headquarters Building in Kansai, which he lauded as an area of strategic importance to kosen-rufu. Shin'ichi recalled how he and the Kansai members had written a golden page in the history of their movement and urged the young women to make the Kansai organization a model for the entire Soka Gakkai.

He also voiced his hope that they would all persevere in faith with great confidence and conviction, pointing to the countless members who had clearly proven with their lives that faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was the key to attaining absolute happiness. He closed by calling on the young women to make the year ahead one of ceaseless advancement toward great happiness, without retreating in faith or being swayed in the slightest by anything.

It was a powerful speech. Many were confident that Shin'ichi would emerge victorious from court the following day. Through his example and demeanor, many learned what it meant to live with the undaunted courage of a lion king.

One of the young women present would later remark: "You'd expect someone waiting to be judged by the court to be wracked with anxiety. But Mr. Yamamoto was far more concerned about the typhoon victims and encouraging everyone by announcing a new community center. I was moved to tears by his warmth and strength. I resolved that I, too, would strive to win, no matter what."

Immediately afterward, Shin'ichi attended the young men's division leaders meeting. Here he outlined the events leading up to the Osaka Incident, solemnly relating the injustice of his arrest, based as it was on trumped-up charges.

"I will not flinch in the face of any persecution," he declared. "Even if I am pronounced guilty and imprisoned again, it would be a small matter compared to the great persecutions Nichiren Daishonin endured. Having pledged to carry on the work of presidents Makiguchi and Toda, I do not hold my life dear.

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# Actively Closing the Gap

## Bridging the Gap Through My Actions

By **JULIE PICKELL**  
WASHINGTON, D.C., JOINT TERRITORY



When I was hired by the Virginia Beach Police Department in 1987, I really thought I could change things — I was going to save everyone and make everything better. Very soon I realized there were no good or bad people, and no situation was black or white; rather, there were many shades of gray.

I was by no means naive to human suffering. My mother and I were introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1978 when I was 15. It changed my life! Before that, my family endured alcoholism, poverty and often hopelessness. As much as we loved one another, we were dysfunctional.

In 1987, I graduated from the Police Academy and was now "on the street." I immediately found out that wearing a blue uniform, much of the time, created an instant gap. I was seeing that there are people who don't like the police — who even hate them.

As a practicing Buddhist, I tried to treat everyone with re-

spect. No matter how diverse the people I was encountering, they all had the Buddha nature in them. I didn't want to make negative causes, and in some cases it was a challenge. No matter what the other person was saying or doing, I could do my job without being nasty or degrading. I discovered that even in negative situations, I could create something positive.

After several years on the job, I began to feel increasing stress from the events unfolding in the news: There were cases of police officers lying in court, stealing and even beating citizens. There

were also regular reports of officers robbing drug dealers. I became depressed and then angry. Who the hell are these guys? I felt they were giving all police officers a black eye! I was working alongside officers who cared and every day endured things most people couldn't fathom.

My lowest point came in 1989 during the Virginia Beach riots. I was walking a beat at the oceanfront when the riots erupted. I worked three 17-hour days in what felt like a war zone. To get to and from work safely — one

PLEASE SEE GAP, 8

## The Women's Corner

By **WENDY CLARK**  
SGI-USA WOMEN'S DIVISION CHIEF



Wendy Clark

In the spirit of promoting harmony and unity within the women's division I am delighted to introduce, beginning with this issue of the *World Tribune* and continuing on a quarterly basis, a column specifically devoted to the 1997 women's action-based theme, *Actively Closing the Gap*. I couldn't think of a better time than now — the conclusion of the eighth annual commemorative women's nationwide gatherings.

On behalf of all the women, I'd like to express sincere appreciation to the children, men and women who supported us with your time and talent. Your behind-the-scenes involvement was vital to our success.

Many women throughout the country told me of the impact their home visits to promote the gatherings had in strengthening personal relationships. The result: More than 21,000 women and their guests gathered at more than 750 locations throughout the United States. Each get-together was unique and creative. Participants were deeply moved by the dramatic, courageous stories shared by women who had experienced the joy of victory after closing the various gaps in their lives.

President and Mrs. Ikeda were most pleased to hear how dynamic and well attended these meetings were. Congratulations, everyone!

As you know, the purpose of these commemorative meetings was to celebrate the first annual women's division meeting in 1990 at which time President Ikeda gave us the "clear mirror" guidance. In it he stated: "What is the purpose of life? It is happiness."

As practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, we know that happiness cannot be given to us. It will not magically appear in our lives. It is not something to wait for. Happiness is the result of an inner transformation, something we must actively challenge ourselves to create. To achieve happiness, we must confront and overcome our negative life tendencies resulting from attitudes or actions generated from our lower ego. Often such tendencies result in gaps or as a sense of incompleteness appearing in our lives. Fear often rushes in to fill this empty space and at other times we languish with an absence of feeling.

The great news is that once we overcome this sense of incompleteness, like a domino effect those in our immediate environment feel it. Even others down the line whom we don't know can be influenced positively.

Of course we'll always have challenges and struggles that appear as gaps — they're a necessary and natural element of growth. But without worrying, let's chant to the Gohonzon and take positive action; that way, time and again we will certainly see these gaps close.

Instead of focusing on what's not there — the empty spaces, the distance, the differences — we can focus on creating a fulfilled, supreme state of life based on a correct practice for ourselves and others. Simply put, we manifest this "only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 5). Then, just as promised by the Daishonin, winter will always turn into spring.



## Your Participation Is Needed

Thank you to the many women who sent contributions for this, our first effort. Please continue submitting your poems, essays, experiences, artistic expressions and book or film reviews. We are seeking additional contributions directly related to our theme of *Actively Closing the Gap*.

Please include photo, name, address, day and evening telephone numbers and fax number if available. Mail your submission typed and

double-spaced to: Secretariat Chief Kazue Zaitzu, SGI-USA World Culture Center, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401



# Caring About the Happiness of Others

By THEA MATHEWS  
COLUMBUS, OHIO

Eighteen months ago, I had the best supervisor in the world. Then he resigned. He had been instrumental in helping our plant improve its production performance. We mutually respected each other's work. He respected my contribution to the plant and showed it with promotions and raises that I really needed to support my family. He was also instrumental in securing my position when the plant had been threatened with closing, and I worked hard to let him know his efforts and confidence in me were not wasted.

Working for someone you both respect and like is rare. I was really sorry to see him go. So I chanted for the next supervisor to be even better than the one who left, and that he would take our plant to the next level so it wouldn't have to close.

Six weeks later, my new supervisor, Jerry, arrived. Since I had been chanting for a great new manager, I was sure I would really like and respect him. But after several weeks, I asked, "Where has my daimoku gone wrong?" He was so awful — he proudly displayed his negativity like a suit of shining armor.

Our personalities clashed in every way. He acted like a chauvinist and a bigot and gave me a hard time about everything I did. Meanwhile, he and the other manager would take long

lunches, run errands together and hang out in his office talking sports all the time. Jerry also didn't seem to care about the plant and its problems.

Our plant was really suffering because of poor staffing and large volumes of work. We struggled every week to fulfill our goals. In spite of that, two weeks after he started as plant manager, he left on vacation and was gone one week every month for the next nine months. To be honest, sometimes it was for training, but mostly it was for vacation. And when he was gone, Jerry left the other manager in charge, who didn't even care enough to put in the time and effort to ensure our performance was up to standard. Every time something went wrong when Jerry was gone, somehow I got blamed for it.

I began to hate Jerry and my job with a passion. Unfortunately, I was trapped. My husband, Bruce, had two years of school left, and I just didn't feel that finding another job was an option for me.

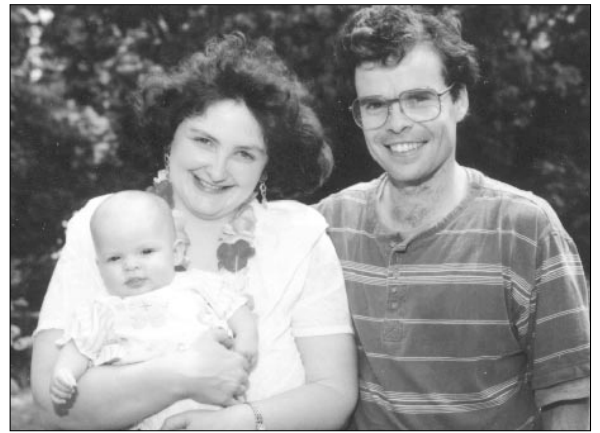
Then February came around. Time to read the "clear mirror" guidance. Every year I groan about reading it, and every year I'm glad I do. This time was no different. I realized I had been avoiding facing this situation with my practice and chanting about it. I decided that every day I would chant to understand Jerry and for him to become happy — no matter how angry and negative I felt toward him! Theoretically, I know everyone has a Bud-

dha nature, but I was sure this guy must be the exception to the rule.

After several more weeks of no breakthrough, one day I was struggling to chant. In the midst of my daimoku, I recalled how I felt when I first came to Columbus. I remembered how frightened and lonely I had been. I recalled how when these feelings were strongest, I could be nasty to other people for no reason. I realized that when people are suffering, they find it difficult to care about and be nice to others. Then I felt that maybe, just maybe, my supervisor was not a creep, but just very unhappy.

He had moved from a place where, culturally, he was comfortable and had lots of friends and was close to his family. Here, he felt different, had trouble making friends and was far away from his family. He had come from a warm climate to a cold, rainy climate, and couldn't get out to play sports and do things he loved to do. He had gained a lot of weight since he arrived, and that was making him unhappy, too. I realized that as miserable as I was, he was miserable as well, and that instead of trying to support and understand him, I had wanted him to support and understand me. I was acting as selfish as he was.

That self-realization made me care about his happiness as much as I care about mine. Now chanting for his happiness became easy. Over time, things started to change



Thea and Bruce Mathews.

for both of us. Although sometimes he and I had setbacks, he started coming in my office and talking with me about his life and what he was going through. Understanding him better, I no longer offended him when we needed to resolve differences. I helped him learn more about Columbus.

Jerry started to reward me for my efforts at work and encourage me when he felt I'd done something particularly well. As a result, when he did criticize my performance, I could see it as encouragement to do better. I also chanted for him to have someone in his life who cared about him. He became friends with another guy in the plant, and they began doing social things together. He started losing weight. Then he met a woman, and they really cherished each other.

Last September, our work volume was low and Jerry had to decide which manager to lay off. Because he now recognized how committed I had been to my work and keeping the plant open, he laid off the other manager. I was stunned. If he had faced this decision six months earlier, I know that the manager he would have laid off would have been me.

This relationship has gone be-

yond my best expectations. I can now say I really respect Jerry. Now it's OK that we don't always agree. I can accept that everyone doesn't have to see things my way all the time. I look forward to seeing him every day and truly wish for his continued happiness.

In the open letter by our SGI-USA women's division chief, Wendy Clark ("How Will We Make a 'Great' America?" Aug. 30, 1996, *World Tribune*), she writes: "First, I think we must accept the fact that differences do indeed exist among us.... Second, we must deeply respect one another's humanity in spite of our apparent differences. Everyone, after all, possesses the Buddha nature.... Because when you think about it, it all boils down to simply caring about someone's happiness as we do our own." How true.

Overcoming my tendency to be abrasive has improved my relationships with others as well. Experiencing how, based on daimoku, you can create a wonderful relationship out of what seems like a hopelessly bad one has convinced me that I can continue closing the gaps between myself and others whenever and wherever they appear. ❧

## GAP, FROM PAGE 7

officer was beaten in his car while leaving work — I had to turn my shirt inside out to hide my police patches. I seriously considered quitting.

I knew I was at a crossroads. I put my faith in the Gohonzon and chanted daimoku to understand and make a decision. I began to see clearly that I couldn't hide from what's happening in the world just because it would be easier. I am a police officer because that is my mission. I am at that homicide, suicide, robbery or child abuse incident so that I can provide strength, compassion and protection for people in need.

I started to focus on the positive aspects and outcomes. In the process, I began to love my job.

Shortly after that, I became a detective and worked burglary and sex crimes. I am the second female in the history of the Virginia Beach Police Department to work robbery and homicide cases.

Although I cannot actively propagate at my workplace, all my co-workers know that I'm a Buddhist. Through my actions, I believe I am propagating this religion. Many times they are amazed at the respect and cooperation I get from the most hardened criminals and hostile citizens. Through my actions, I have

changed for the better many people's perceptions of the police.

And I have helped so many people in their time of crisis. That is how I've tried to bridge the gap.

I realize that wherever I am in my life and career is where my mission lies. I am where I am for a reason. By showing respect to the people I encounter and through sin-

*Wherever I am  
in my life is  
where my  
mission lies. I  
am where I  
am for a  
reason.... I can  
touch a  
person's  
heart.*

cere, meaningful dialogue, I can touch a person's heart and begin to bridge the gap. I know that no matter how horrendous the situation I may find myself in, I can change poison into medicine through this practice.

I am happy to report that on Nov. 16, 1996, I was reassigned to the position of personnel selection officer in

which I handle the hiring and assist with the training of recruits at the police academy. What a tremendous benefit! After all the anger I felt and all the daimoku I chanted, it's great to now have direct input into who we entrust with so much power to protect all of us.

On a final note, I would like to thank my women's division district leader who never gave up on me when I pulled away from the organization. Although I never stopped chanting, who knows how much faster I could have changed things with the support and guidance of the SGI-USA members. It's so good to be back! ❧

## DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

## Finding Happiness in Your Work

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



This is the 8th installment in a series of discussions on youth between SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing the members of the high school division.

**Kimura:** Today, we'd like to ask about employment and careers. Everyone has different hopes for the future. Some people want to become diplomats or kindergarten teachers. Others dream of becoming computer programmers, singers, journalists fighting for a just cause, welfare workers, refugee relief workers, makeup artists, cartoonists or educators able to awaken great hopes and aspirations in their students.

Even among those who say they know what they want to do in the future, I'm sure some are working hard to realize their dream, while others aren't taking any concrete steps toward attaining it.

**Igeta:** I often hear students say things like "I was told to be-

come a doctor, but I'm not sure if that's what I want to do," or "I wanted to become a flight attendant but I don't think I have what it takes," or "My choices are limited because of the subjects I've taken," or "I'm an only child and I'm confused as to whether I should carry on the family business," or "I'm not interested in anything in particular, but I'd like to be famous in some area and be in the spotlight," or "My dreams keep changing with every new person I meet."

Some students have also said to me, "I get scared sometimes because I have no idea what I want to do in the future."

**Ikeda:** Life is long. The true result of your daily struggles will be revealed in your 40s, 50s and 60s. So it is important that you find something — it doesn't matter what — with which to challenge yourself while you are young. Regard your youth as the time to study and train yourself.

Everyone has a unique mission that only they can fulfill. That doesn't mean, however, that you should sit around and do nothing, waiting for some-

one to tell you what it is. It is fundamental that you discover your mission on your own.

Precious gems start out buried underground. If no one mines them, they'll stay buried. And if they aren't polished once they've been dug out, they will remain in the rough.

All of you, high school division members, have a rare jewel in your lives. You are each like a mountain concealing a precious gem. What a shame it would be to end your life without having uncovered your inner jewel! So when your parents or teachers at school tell you to study hard, they are saying in effect, "Unearth the jewel in your life and polish it!"

Of course, studying is but one means by which to reveal your inner gem. So please don't evaluate yourself based solely on the grades you get. Human potential is not so limited that it can be measured merely by one's aptitude for rote learning.

It has been said recently that one's EQ (emotional quotient) is more important than one's IQ (intelligence quotient). This attests to the importance of such broad-ranging human qualities as com-

passion or an indomitable fighting spirit, which no IQ test can gauge. For this reason, it is foolish to think that the grades you get at 16 or 18 will determine the rest of your life. There's much more to human potential than that.

The problem is when you fall into the trap of thinking that grades are the be-all and end-all and decide that your present grades doom you to a less-than-bright future. If you think this way, you will keep yourself from nurturing those abilities you have. If you give up on trying to mine the gem in your life, your development as a person will cease. This is something to avoid at all costs.

Some people get accepted into university but fail to work hard once there. Others stop striving for personal growth after entering a big company or becoming bureaucrats, doctors or lawyers. Many people, achieving the careers they aimed for, forget the spirit to work for others. Such people give thought only to what they want to become — not to what they can do to contribute to society. Actually, achieving such goals is just the beginning, not the final destination.

'Through work, one can develop and fulfill oneself and bring forth the unique value that lies within — and share that value with society. Work exists for the joy of creating value.'

**Kimura:** Some students believe they are incapable because their grades are poor. Others think that they no longer need to make efforts once they've landed a great job. You're saying that both of these attitudes are wrong.

**Ikeda:** Exactly. People should constantly strive to unearth the jewel in their life and polish it. There are countless examples of people who did not stand out during high school but who struck a rich deposit of hidden potential when they entered society and gained life experience. Therefore, getting a job is just the starting point in uncovering your true ability; it is absolutely not the final goal. There is no need to be impatient. It is important that you make your way up the mountain of life steadily, without rushing or giving up.

I want those of you who have already decided what you want to do in the future to forge ahead purposefully. You mustn't be halfhearted. When you pursue something with a strong determination, you will have no re-

PLEASE SEE YOUTH, NEXT PAGE

## YOUTH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

grets even should you fail. And if you succeed, you can achieve truly great things. Whether you fail or succeed, your steady efforts will lead you to your next path.

For those of you who have not yet decided your future course, please concentrate your energies

The most important thing is that you get into the habit of challenging yourself to the limit. In a sense, the results you get are not so important. The actual grades you receive in high school, for instance, won't decide the rest of your life. But the habit of pushing yourself to the limit will in time bear fruit. It will distinguish you from others

case. There are so many things you just won't understand until you actually start working. Plus, there are as many kinds of companies as there are people.

Therefore, it is important to have the inner strength and common sense to learn everything you can where you are, to develop the means by which to support your life, to pursue substance rather than the ephemeral, and to explore the depths of your potential. It is vital that you become irreplaceable wherever you are.

I once heard the following story: In the 19th century, the president of France was invited to a banquet sponsored by one of his wealthy countrymen. Strangely enough, the French leader found himself seated not as the guest of honor but in the 16th seat from the head of the table. A railroad engineer occupied the first seat, a literary scholar the second and a science professor sat in the third.

A guest, puzzled by the seating order, asked the host why. The response was: "The guests have been seated according to their true importance. By people of true importance I mean those people who possess an outstanding ability and cannot be replaced by anyone else." In other words, because the guest of honor was the world's foremost authority on trains, he was irreplaceable. The guests occupying the second and third seats were also leading experts in their fields. The president, however, could be replaced: Someone else could take over his job.

Whether this story is true or not, it takes a truly mature society to openly spread such frank, candid ideas.

I want you, the high school division members, to become people who support society not in name but in substance. I also hope you will create a society that cherishes such people.

At any rate, we have to make a living to survive. That's why jobs exist. Such is the way of society; it is the way life goes.

You have the right to decide what type of job you want to do; the choices are open. Having said that, however, many jobs do require a certain level of academic qualification and experience. Some people start working right out of high school, either out of choice or because of their family situation. Others join the workforce after graduating from college, while others become homemakers. Some people aim to become public servants, and still others strive to gain technical proficiency in some field. The bottom line is that there are many different options, all of

which you are at liberty to choose from.

**Igeta:** What criteria should we go by when looking for a job?

**Ikedo:** The Japanese poet Takuboku Ishikawa (1886-1912) once penned this verse, which I recorded in my notes when I was young: "Would that I had a vocation / To carry out with joy / Once I have fulfilled it / I wish to die." He is talking about his mission, the work he was born for.

However, few people are fortunate to find their ideal job from the outset. Sometimes the career you wish to pursue may differ from the ideas your parents or others in your life have for you. In such a situation what are you to do?

President Toda once said the criteria for selecting a job could be found in "The Theory of Value," a philosophical treatise by his mentor, founding Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Mr. Toda upheld the path of mentor and disciple throughout his life.

Mr. Makiguchi taught that there are three kinds of value: beauty, benefit and good. In the working world, the value of beauty means to find a job you like; the value of benefit is to get a job that earns you a salary that can support your daily life; the value of good means to find a job that helps others and contributes to society. Mr. Toda once said, "Everyone's ideal is to get a job they like (beauty), that offers financial security (benefit), where they can contribute to society (good)."

**Kimura:** I couldn't agree more.

**Ikedo:** But not many people can find the perfect job from the start. Some may have a job they like, but it isn't putting food on the table; or their job pays well, but they hate it. That's the way things go sometimes. Then there are some who discover that they're just not cut out for the career they dreamt of and aspired to.

President Toda said that the most important thing is to first become an indispensable person wherever you are. Instead of moaning that a job differs from what you'd like to be doing, he said, become a first-class individual at that job. This will open the path leading to the next phase in your life, during which you should also continue doing your best. Such continuous efforts are guaranteed to land you a job that you like, that supports

your life, and that allows you to contribute to society.

And then, when you look back later, you will see how all of your past efforts have become precious assets in your ideal field. You will realize that none of your efforts and hardships have been wasted. Mr. Toda taught that this is the great benefit of the Mystic Law.

**Kimura:** What about people who set out to achieve one dream, but then have a change of heart and pursue a different path altogether?

**Ikedo:** That's perfectly all right. Few people started out with the ambition of doing what they're doing.

My experience was that I wanted to become a newspaper reporter, but my poor health prevented me. Today, however, I have become a writer who can hold his own in the literary world.

At one point, I worked for a small publishing company. Because of its limited number of staff, I had to work very hard—but to the extent that I did, I gained practical experience.

After the war, I worked for the Kamata Industries Association [established in 1946 for the promotion of small- to medium-sized businesses in Kamata, Ota Ward, Tokyo]. It, too, was a small operation, but what I went through on that job gave me a chance to really look at myself. Everything I learned back then is of value to my life now. The important thing is to develop yourself in your present situation, to take control of your growth.

Once you have decided on a job, I hope you will not be the kind of person who quits at the drop of a hat and is always insecure and complaining. Nevertheless, if after you've given it your all you decide that your job isn't right for you and you move on, that's perfectly all right, too. My concern is that you don't forget you are responsible for your environment when you make your decision.

Taking your place as a member of society is a challenge; it is a struggle to survive. But wherever you are is exactly where you need to be, so you must strive there to the best of your ability.

A tree doesn't grow strong and tall within one or two days. In the same way, successful people didn't get to where they are in only one or two years. This applies to everything.

There is a saying that urges us, "Excel at something!" It is

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



'The important thing is to be proud of your work, to live true to yourself.'

on the things you need to accomplish right now. You will discover your path as you keep searching, chanting earnestly to find your direction and seeking advice and guidance from those around you.

**Igeta:** Some people tell me that they don't have any special talents.

**Ikedo:** That just isn't true. The problem lies in people limiting themselves. There is a saying that everyone has some kind of gift. Being talented doesn't mean just being a good musician, writer or athlete. There are many kinds of talent. You may, for instance, be a great conversationalist, or make friends easily or put others at ease. Or you may have a gift for nursing, a knack for telling jokes, selling things or economizing. You may always be punctual, patient, reliable, kind or optimistic. Or you may love taking on new challenges, be strongly committed to peace or bring joy to others.

Each of us is as unique as a cherry, plum, peach or apricot blossom, like the Daishonin states in the Goshō. Cherry blossoms are cherry blossoms and plum blossoms are plum blossoms. Accordingly, you must bloom in the way that only you can.

Without a doubt you have your own jewel, your own innate talent inside you. The question is: How can you discover that talent? The only way is to exert yourself to the limit. Your true potential will emerge when you give everything you've got to your studies, sports or whatever.

without fail. It will bring your unique talent to shine.

One saying goes that people will not exceed their dreams. So you should have big dreams. But you must recognize that dreams are dreams and reality is reality. It's natural, therefore, that to achieve big dreams, you must view your situation realistically and work with your entire being to see that they come true.

The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, once said, "It is vital for youth to have the tenacity to become the very best at something." Tenacity is crucial. You cannot make the gem inside your life shine with easy-going efforts.

**Kimura:** High school students in Japan seem to have a very narrow view of what work is all about. Television portrays a good job as one where you wear nice suits, carry a cellular phone and use computers. And many students want to become TV celebrities or musicians. It's difficult to know what a good profession really is.

**Ikedo:** For those of you who just can't decide what kind of work you'd like to do, why not start out with a job that you can get easily, something you are familiar with? That way you can gain practical experience and find out what you're good at.

Many young people may be under the impression that it is better to work for a large company or a government agency than for a small, unexciting factory. But often this is not the

YOUTH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

important to become trusted by others wherever you are, to shine with excellence. Sometimes people may dislike their job at first, but grow to love it once they become serious about doing their best. "What one likes, one will do well," goes another saying. Growing to like your job can also enable you to develop your talent. Once you have decided to work at a certain place, it is important that you pursue the path you have chosen without being discouraged or defeated, so that you will have no regrets over making that choice.

**Kimura:** Some students say, "I just want to get into a big-name company."

**Ikeda:** Well, everyone is free to select where they'd like to work. I hope those students will work very hard to achieve their goals.

Japan, however, is in the midst of an economic recession; the outlook isn't good. What's more, Japan has one of the largest budget deficits in the world and its system of lifetime employment is breaking down. Companies once considered prestigious no longer guarantee security, while educational background alone no longer assures a good job. These days even large companies go under. You won't be protected just because you work for a company with a big name. That's the reality today.

So what, then, is important? The answer is true capability. It is vital to develop all kinds of strengths and abilities — such as an inquisitive mind, specialist skills, mental strength and flexibility.

Study is a lifelong endeavor; just graduating from university isn't enough. Someone once said that we learn only about 10 percent of what we need in life from college, no matter how prestigious the school. There are also some who never go to college or others who go back to school later in life. You can also participate in a correspondence program like Soka University's.

All of you face the challenge of triumphing in a society that stresses real ability more than ever.

**Igeta:** Some people have friends who, given the choice, wouldn't work at all, or who only want an easy job and won't take on work if it's strenuous or requires getting dirty, or who go

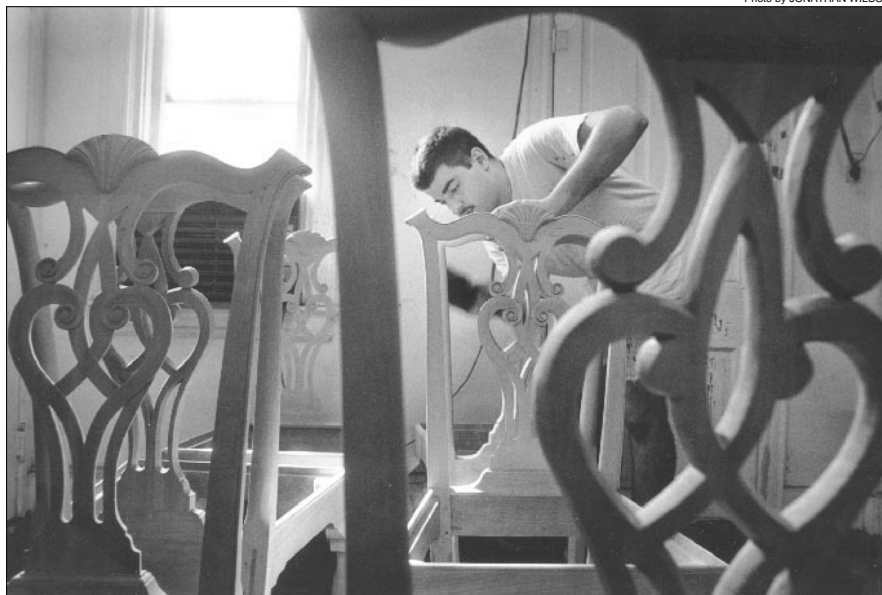


Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

"I will share with you words of the Russian novelist Maxim Gorky (1868–1936) from his play "The Lower Depths," in which one of his characters says: "When work is a pleasure, life is a joy! When work is a duty, life is slavery." Your attitude toward work, which takes up the better part of your day, decisively determines the quality of your life."

to college because they don't want to look for a job right away.

**Kimura:** Some view work as an unpleasant chore they must do to earn money to support their leisure activities.

**Ikeda:** I'm not going to criticize this line of thinking. However, I will share with you words of the Russian novelist Maxim Gorky (1868–1936) from his play *The Lower Depths*, in which one of his characters says: "When work is a pleasure, life is a joy! When work is a duty, life is slavery."<sup>1</sup> Your attitude toward work, which takes up the better part of your day, decisively determines the quality of your life.

Dr. David Norton, the late professor of philosophy at the University of Delaware, once said something like: "Many students are caught up in the notion that the only purpose of employment is to earn money, that happiness means having money to gratify their desires. But since there is no limit to those desires, they can never truly be satisfied. Real happiness is found in working. Through work, one can develop and fulfill oneself and bring forth the unique value that lies within — and share that value with society. Work exists for the joy of creating value."

It is just as he says. Someone else observed that a person's work should bring happiness to others. Life is truly wonderful when you're needed somewhere. How boring and empty life would be if, for instance, just because we had the means, all we

did every day was pursue idle diversions.

**Igeta:** I think people can gain something much more valuable than money from working.

**Ikeda:** Yes. It's natural to work if one is earning a salary; work is essentially a contract between the employer and employee. But to slack off at work just because one's salary isn't high is foolish.

Moreover, all of you are young. It might even be a good idea to have the spirit, "I'll do more than I'm paid for!" This is how you can train yourself.

To receive a salary — anything earned through honest labor — is precious, regardless of the amount. Of course, there's nothing better than receiving a good salary, but \$100 earned through one's hard work and efforts is a golden treasure — whereas stealing that same \$100 or acquiring it through some other illicit means has no more value than dung or rubble. Stolen or extorted money is dirty. It will not bring happiness. As the saying goes, "Ill gotten, ill spent."

There are some who once enjoyed great prestige as influential government officials but who accepted bribes and consequently must live the rest of their lives labeled as criminals.

Depending on one's state of life, money can be used either toward ill-intentioned ends or noble ends. The state of one's heart can change everything.

When you get right down to it, the greatest happiness is found in applying yourself with confidence and wisdom in your work-place as an exemplary member

of society, working hard for a fulfilling life and the well-being of your family. A person who does so is a victor in life.

**Igeta:** Some people are worried about how they will get along with their co-workers upon entering a company.

**Ikeda:** Certainly, when working in a company — which is like a society or community all its own — it is important to create harmonious relations with your colleagues and superiors, using wisdom and discretion along the way. If you incur your co-workers' dislike by being selfish or egotistic, you will be a loser in work and society. Wisdom is vital to being successful at one's work.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd. ed.], p. 240).

Society, in many ways, is full of contradictions. Some parts are quite ugly, while others are pretty harsh at times. I hope you will not take a complacent attitude toward such things and let society get the better of you. If that happens, then no matter what excuses you make, defeat is defeat. You must forge your way adeptly through the rough seas of society, always keeping your head above water.

President Makiguchi said there are three types of people in the world: those you want to have around, those whose presence or absence doesn't make a difference and those whose presence causes problems. Please become a person others appreciate

having around. This means becoming someone who is liked and trusted at work. You also mustn't forget to do your best. This is the correct way of life for believers in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, which teaches that Buddhahood is eternally inherent in our lives.

**Kimura:** Many students say they want to work for world peace or promote the humanistic principles of the Daishonin's Buddhism through their work and have asked what kind of job they should do.

**President Ikeda:** Aspiring to devote oneself to a humanistic cause, to upholding human rights and spreading the ideals of Buddhism out of a desire to work for the people's happiness and welfare, is a truly laudable ambition.

That does not mean, however, that you cannot contribute to peace unless you're in some special profession. Of course, while I highly commend anyone who wishes to work for the United Nations or become a volunteer worker overseas, there are many people striving for peace in their own, humble specialties.

I have met many such people, like Argentina's Dr. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, a sculptor and architect who won the Nobel Peace Prize as well as the 1996 Global Citizen Award of the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, for his activities to protect human rights. And Rosa Parks, the mother of the American civil rights movement, who was working as a tailor's assistant in a department store when she became the catalyst for the famous bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala., in 1955.

The important thing is to be proud of your work and your capacity, to live true to yourself. There have been many revolutionaries throughout history who lost their lives in the struggle for reformation. Theirs, too, was a worthy vocation.

At any rate, I want each of you to be active in all fields. Activity is another name for happiness. What's important is that you give free, unfettered play to your unique talents, that you live with the full radiance of your beings. This is what it means to be truly alive.

World peace and widespread understanding of the humanistic ideals of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism will be achieved by each of you excelling in your respective fields. 卍

1. Maxim Gorky, *The Lower Depths and Other Plays*, trans. Alexander Bakshy (Chelsea, Michigan: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 14.

By PATTY JACOBS  
LAS VEGAS CORRESPONDENT

When John, Leroy and Michael Payton make music together, they know they have changed poison into medicine. Forward Motion, their band, is such a successful lounge act it's solidly booked for the rest of 1997 and half of 1998, according to Leroy.

"We owe everything we have today to the SGI practice," he says. When they were living in San Diego in 1969, the three brothers began their music careers in the Brass Band. "I had been practicing Buddhism for many years and I thought it would be good for the boys to get involved in Brass Band," says their mother, Kumiko Payton.

John was 12 when he started in Brass Band. Leroy originally started on the drums when he was 10 or 11, but later switched to saxophone. Michael was 10 when he started.

John credits Brass Band and his high school music teacher for his success. In 1974, when he was a senior, he entered a drumming contest. "Our school was the last to be notified and I only had two weeks to prepare, while all the other contestants had been preparing for six months," he remembers. "But my teacher had such a strong determination — actually he had the SGI spirit — that I went against all odds to enter and win the contest." Another drummer was "supposed" to win first place, but John credits his teacher's full trust in his ability, plus his own determination to "never give up," to winning the contest.

When they were teenagers, because of their love of music and their enthusiasm, the brothers were invited to play weekend gigs at the enlisted men's clubs on the Navy base in San Diego. They were so young their mother had to accompany them to play dates. John and Leroy were in high school and Michael was in grade school.

"We never wanted to do anything except play music," John says. "We formed our first group with Gakkai members and started playing local clubs in San Diego." Their first club date was on Cinco de Mayo; the club owner said he had never seen this kind of spirit in a band, remembers Leroy.

Meanwhile, Michael, though involved with the band, kept running into trouble with drugs. Michael suffered from panic disorder syndrome and was often paralyzed with fear. He took drugs to overcome the fear but they did not help. He had a chance to go to

Japan for four months to play in a band over there, but when he came back to the United States his drug use increased. He overdosed three times and almost died. "I kept trying to get back on track and after that third overdose I knew I had to change my life," he reflects. "Fortunately, I was still connected to the SGI."

By 1994, Michael had slowly gotten back on his feet and really begun to see himself. "I had to apologize to a lot of people," he says. "Purity started to come into my practice. My practice is not a formality, it's my life. I feel I'm in control of my life and I feel brand new. I made a fresh start and I'm married now. My brothers are the best — they have always been there for me."

"We just threw around some names and it just popped out," Leroy explains. "I have no idea where it came from, but we all decided we liked it."

Their agent, in San Diego, booked them for a week at the Palace Station in Las Vegas in 1987. They drove from San Diego and played only one performance. "We didn't realize when we accepted the Las Vegas dates that we had a conflict in our schedule," Leroy says. "We had been double-booked and felt we had no choice but to go back to San Diego."

The owner of the Las Vegas casino was thrilled with the group because they were instantly popular, but he was upset when they started back to San Diego. He threatened them by saying, "You will never be back here." John told him they would not only be back but that "we will own Las Vegas." Then he chanted for five hours, all the way back to San Diego.

They continued working in San Diego and were hired again by the Palace Station — now with a different owner — in 1990 and

1991, commuting all the time from San Diego. In 1992, they moved to Las Vegas and also started playing various other casino lounges.

Success came quickly for the group, and soon they were "too successful." But how could that be? Lounge shows in Las Vegas are usually free and the object is to bring people into the casinos to enjoy the music and then stay to gamble. Yet Forward Motion had so much energy and their music was so upbeat that people would stand in line to get into their shows. At Maxim's, the club started charging a two-drink minimum and then a \$5 cover charge to thin out the crowds. "No matter what they did, every show we did it was standing room only," Leroy says. "And it all comes from the spirit we had when we were in Brass Band."

In 1993 their success became a serious problem. One particular night the crowd at a casino lounge got rowdy and a fight broke out. Even though none of the Forward

Motion musicians were involved, the casino canceled their contract and branded them as a hard-core band that caused crowds to fight.

The band struggled to stay together. They couldn't get any local club dates, so they traveled all over the Western states playing whatever club dates their agent could get.

By the end of 1993, the rest of the band left and the three brothers were reduced to playing small clubs around Las Vegas as a threesome. John worked in a car wash and Leroy got a job moving furniture. "We knew we had been blackballed because of our energy, but we determined to keep fighting," Leroy says.

Finally, they got a break when their agent booked them for the Rio Hotel lounge. The brothers decided to change their act and focus on soft power, just like SGI President Ikeda had said. They mellowed out their act, broadening their music selections to include big band sounds and other low key elements.

They have been working steadily ever since. As soon as they got their first club date again, they reassembled their band and won over a bigger audience. Now Forward Motion can be heard at the Golden Nugget, the Stardust, the Palace Station, the Sahara and the Excalibur. They convinced their mother to move from San Diego to Las Vegas a year and a half ago.

"Once we got that date at the Rio our determined was to stay solidly booked up, and we have," Leroy says. "We have shown tremendous actual proof in our lives by being only one of a handful of groups who works in Las Vegas all year round." Next year the group is planning a tour; they are currently working on a CD.

"The Brass Band spirit is our mission," John says. "We have talked about this wherever we go and have introduced it all over the Western states and Canada." The Payton brothers have, for instance, introduced high school students to the Brass Band and seen the youngsters' lives change. "One year later, we have been back and heard their groups play," John says. "It affects the whole family. There is one family in Utah where the teenagers got involved in the Brass Band and now the whole family practices."

Forward Motion performs with other entertainers at the Spring Family Festival hosted by the SGI-USA Las Vegas Territory, on April 13. Recently, John, district chief of Sahara District, agreed to mentor the drum section of the new Music Corps in Las Vegas.



Leroy (l, second row), John (l, third row) and Michael (top row), the Payton brothers, continue to show actual proof of their faith through the success of their group, Forward Motion.

## Musicians Turn Poison Into Medicine



## SIGN POSTS

APPLYING  
NICHIREN  
DAISHONIN'S  
WRITINGS TO  
DAILY LIFE

### Being a Hero

By SHIN YATOMI

YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE CHIEF

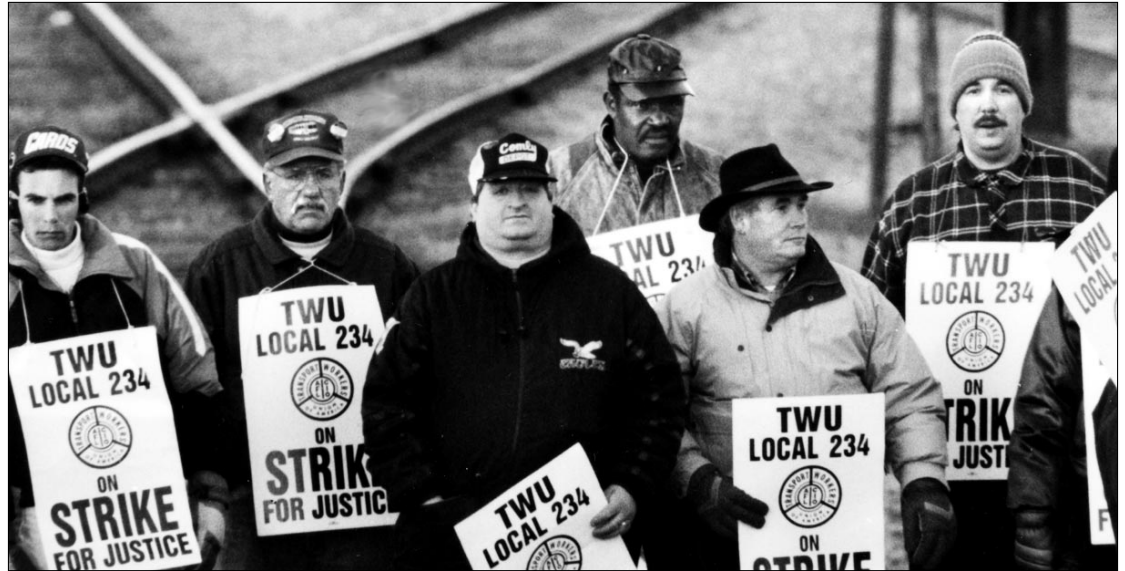
The Regent's Supreme Council met to discuss whether to behead me or banish me from Kamakura and whether to confiscate the estates of my disciples and lay supporters, or to imprison, exile or execute them. Hearing of this, I rejoiced, saying that I had long expected it to come to this. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 175)

A hero is not a super human being. A hero is someone who, with all his or her human limitations and weaknesses, moves forward in the face of a formidable destiny.

I have been studying *The Iliad*, in which Homer sings of the heroic quality of the Trojan warrior Hector. Burdened with the weighty responsibility of saving the city of Troy from impending doom, he, though limited in strength, single-handedly fights the far greater Greek forces led by Achilles — whose super-human strength is unrivaled by any mortal on earth. Hector says, "Long ago I learned / how to be brave, how to go forward always" (trans. Robert Fitzgerald, Book 6, lines 517-8).

Nichiren in the above passage expresses his determination, with a heroic ring similar to that of Hector's, not to retreat even a single step in his religious conviction. Yet he is keenly aware of the imminent persecution. His sense of responsibility for the lives of his followers is racking his heart. Also, being human, no doubt his own life is dear to him. The possibility of survival for him, his religious order and his teaching seems remote. Facing all the seemingly impossible odds against him he stands his ground.

Every day we face new challenges and make different choices. It is no easy task to remain true to our beliefs — the greater the beliefs we embrace, the more difficult it becomes to uphold them. But being a hero does not mean that we must become super human beings. With all the weaknesses we may have, we just have to learn how to be brave, how, as Homer puts it, "To go forward always." ☐



'Living in the United States at the end of the 20th century, it may be a little difficult to understand the situation in which the Daishonin spoke. After all, we live in a country and time where free speech is a right. If we disagree, we may say so — to another person, to a group, at a press conference or on e-mail.'

### PROCLAMATION OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM — APRIL 28

## Not What They Expected

By CRAIG GREEN

LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

On April 28, 1253, a challenge was made to religion in Japan. This challenge has since led to a change in religious thought throughout the world.

At 12, Nichiren Daishonin, whose birth name was Zennichi-maro, was sent by his parents to Seicho-ji temple to improve his reading and writing skills. There he pondered why so many people were suffering when so many somehow had faith in Buddhism. His doubt about what the correct Buddhist philosophy was grew deeper. To find the answer, he prayed for wisdom. "From the time I was a small child," he writes, "I prayed to Bodhisattva Kokuzo, asking that I might become the wisest person in all Japan" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 4, pp. 77-78).

At 16, Nichiren was given the choice of returning to secular life or continuing his studies. He decided to join Seicho-ji, taking the name of Zesho-bo Rencho. For the next 15 years, he would study and travel, looking for answers. Texts of the sutras resided in various temples around the country, making it common practice to visit different temples for research. His travels took him to Kamakura, the seat of the government, Enryaku-ji temple at Mount Hiei, Onjo-ji temple and various provinces in western Japan. When he returned to Seicho-ji temple in 1252, many, including his teacher, Dozen-bo, were curious as to what Nichiren had learned in his travels.

The next year, 1253, he was slated to give a lecture. The date was April 28. One can only guess what the audience expected — possibly a lecture that would confirm and illuminate what many of them had studied, or possibly a lecture giving a new perspective on the practices

and customs of different temples throughout the country. And one can assume that what they got was not what they expected.

In the week leading up to his lecture, Nichiren Daishonin prepared alone in his quarters. On the morning of the 28th, he arose and headed toward a hill at Kasagamori. Alone, facing the Pacific Ocean, he chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the first time. Those who attended the lecture held later the same day included his mentor, Dozen-bo, most of the priests studying at the temple, and various lay believers and guests from outlying areas. Nichiren Daishonin began by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The audience was silent. No one was sure what was happening, what was coming next.

He began to discuss the concept of *mappo*, the Latter Day of the Law, expounding on issues he had, no doubt, covered in his studies. He talked about the different forms of Buddhism that were practiced at the time and the need for one way of practice. He spoke of the need to alleviate the confusion of those seeking a correct way to practice Buddhism, defiantly pronouncing that the religions of the day were leading the country to ruin, the people to unhappiness.

Specifically, he condemned Nembutsu, Zen, Shingon and Ritsu as the causes of suffering and unrest in the country. He castigated these four very popular, well-supported sects not only for their misinterpretation of and disrespect for the sutras, but for their lack of compassion for the people. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the crystallization of the Lotus Sutra, was the answer that everyone had been seeking, he said. He further announced that he was changing his name — to Nichiren, meaning "Sun Lotus." ☐

Living in the United States at the end of the 20th century, it may be a little difficult to understand the situation in which the Daishonin spoke. After all, we live in a country and time where free speech is a right. If we disagree, we may say so — to another person, to a group, at a press conference or on e-mail. While there have been and still are instances of free speech being denied, legally it is our right. Speaking our minds certainly does not equate with risking our lives, but in 13th-century Japan this was not necessarily the case. When you spoke your mind or went against the status quo, you be could labeled as a threat, as someone who needed to be silenced.

At the time of this lecture, those in government and in power worked closely with prominent priests, who were practitioners of the sects the Daishonin admonished. Nichiren Daishonin's declaration was seen not only as a threat to other sects but to those in power as well. When word spread of his lecture, anger flared. Tojo Kagenobu of Tojo Village ordered the immediate arrest of Nichiren Daishonin. Fortunately, Dozen-bo, although as shocked by the lecture as anyone, managed to provide the Daishonin with an escape.

On April 28, Nichiren Daishonin did more than chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the first time. At 32, he stood in front of peers and teachers and told them that the four major sects in Japan had brought nothing but harm. He stood before them and effectively said: "What you're doing is wrong. Stop it and stop it now." Though one might think that he was initially driven by emotion, his proclamation and all his future victories were grounded in reason and documentation. His declaration was not only a call of defiance, it was a call of freedom for all those who have followed. ☐

LINDA MAE KLANESKI, HONOLULU

# Getting Serious About Life and Her Responsibilities

**A**loha! I became a member of this organization when I was only 3 months old, and in 1978, my family and I moved from Japan to Hawaii. When I turned 6, my mom began to teach me how to do gongyo. She'd spend every spare moment she had teaching me. At that young age, I loved doing gongyo.

Then as I grew a little older, I began to despise it. I didn't want to pray to the Gohonzon — I wanted to go out and play with

As the years passed, I grew into a very angry child. My attitude became so bad that even my parents were shocked. In my house, it became like a daily ritual for me to fight with my brothers. And this wasn't just any type of fighting. It would get so bad that we'd end up with holes the size of oranges and melons in every door in the house, including the front door. I almost always talked back to my parents, not caring about how mean and hurtful the words I said were. I just didn't care. All

talk in front of people. Talking in front of large groups of people was the No. 1 thing I dreaded. From introducing myself to strangers, to sharing experiences, to reading aloud the *Daily Guidance*, to helping out in skits — all these things I did regularly in the Fife and Drum Corps. I had no choice but to force myself. Sometimes I'd beg my leaders not to make me talk, to choose someone else, or I'd try and hide in the bathrooms so they'd skip my turn. But none of these tactics ever worked.

daimoku or attend any activities.

Eventually, my attitude toward my practice began to be reflected in my daily life. School became such a chore that toward the end of my sophomore year in high school, I began skipping classes. All the while, every year, my grades got worse and worse. In my senior year, I began going out a lot. I'd go out every weekend and stay out until 4:00 in the morning.

**I**barely went to school at all, and when I was there, I just slept in class — I was just a body filling a space. I didn't care what my grades were, I didn't care how angry my parents were, or if all I did was fight with my brothers. My happiness revolved around partying with my friends. Because I was always fighting with my parents, I never wanted to stay home. I'd constantly blame my parents and everyone else around me for my unhappiness.

In 1991, I barely graduated from high school. I don't know how I did it, but I did. Immediately after graduation, I enrolled in a community college. During this time, NSA changed to SGI-USA and SGI President Ikeda's guidance was on soft power. A lot of members stopped practicing, including myself. I knew that this practice was good for me, but I was just so lost during this time that I went astray. I quit Fife and Drum Corps altogether.

Somehow, through all this partying that I did, I was really protected. I know this was because of my mom's daimoku. Ever since I was little, all I can remember is seeing my mom always chanting. When everyone went to bed, my mom was chanting. When we woke up in the morning she was chanting. If she wasn't chanting, she was working, doing activities, or reading book after book after book.

Then one day out of the blue, I get a call from one of my leaders asking me if I'd like to join Fife and Drum Corps and help her put together a Flag Section. I was ecstatic! Ever since I can remember, I've always wanted to do flags, but in the past they needed more instrument players than flags, so I never had a chance. I decided to do it. Not

long thereafter, my leader graduated.

The new Fife and Drum Corps chief was same age as I. We knew each other and got along pretty well. But, as time went by, she would get on my nerves. She would constantly call me to make sure that I was calling the members, asking if I was coming to the meeting, the practice, if I had done this and that. It drove me crazy. I began giving her a hard time, making things really difficult for her. Now I really didn't like her at all. And because I was still partying hard, I would always come to practices late. Sometimes, I'd forget to pick up the members I promised to give rides to, and sometimes I just wouldn't show up.

But this didn't stop her. She kept on, no matter how difficult a time I gave her (and trust me, I really gave her a hard time). She was persistent. I could not understand how, no matter what I did, she never gave up on me. This attitude of hers really freaked me out. Her heart was made of gold, and her intentions were, too. She would always ask me: "Linda, what about the members? Don't you care about them?" I could see the genuine concern she had, but because of my low life-condition I didn't care.

When I'd come to practices late, or not show up or whatever, my members would always call me asking me where I was, why I didn't come to practice, etc. I would feel bad, but I kept this routine going for a while.

As days turned into months, I began feeling a change going on inside of me. It was like my heart was opening up, like the hard ice around it was beginning to melt. It was weird, but I began to feel this sort of responsibility toward the members. They depended on me, but I wasn't there for them. I knew I couldn't help them in the condition I was in. I had to change! I had to show actual proof of my life!

I began reminiscing about my days as a young member in the Fife and Drum Corps. I remembered how much I had enjoyed my practice because I had such great leaders to help guide me along in my practice. From that moment, I made a strong determination to be serious about my practice, about my life, and about my responsibility as a leader.

Slowly, I began chanting daimoku, doing gongyo daily, attending activities. At first, I did it for my members, because I



Linda Mae Klaneski (l) with Hawaii Fife and Drum Corps members. Remembering her younger days in the Fife and Drum Corps helped Linda resolve to care for the girls and take responsibility as chief.

my friends. And I would do anything to get out of doing it, including waking up as early as 6:00 a.m. on the weekends, going to my friends' house and not coming home until 7:00 p.m. But my mom, being as strict as she was, never stood for any of my excuses or games, and I'd end up in big trouble.

Eventually, my mom pushed me into Junior Pioneers (now the Boys and Girls Group). I never wanted to go to those meetings; I just wanted to play with my friends. But in my mom's eyes, these activities came before anything else.

I used to feel so frustrated and resentful toward my mom. I couldn't understand why I had to do gongyo, why I had to go to all the Junior Pioneers meetings, and why I had to do all these things and my two younger brothers didn't.

I cared about was my friends and having fun.

When I turned 10, my mom pushed me into the Fife and Drum Corps. On my first day of practice, I kept wishing and hoping that my new young women's division leader would forget about me. But she didn't. I couldn't run away either, because my mom made sure I woke up early and was ready and waiting when the leader came to pick me up. I felt so uncomfortable that first day. I recognized a few girls from Junior Pioneers and from my district, but I didn't talk to them. I just stayed with my YWD leader the whole time.

In the beginning, I was extremely shy and quiet. I hated meeting new people and being forced into group discussions. I'd always feel pressured and nervous when I knew I'd have to

As time went by, I actually began to enjoy my practice in Fife and Drum Corps. I received such invaluable training and experience that I otherwise would have never gained had my mom not forced me to join. Not only that, but I began making many new friends as well as gaining the confidence I lacked as a young child. All the training that I received while I was in Fife and Drum Corps helped me out so much in my daily life. But I didn't realize this until much later.

As I entered high school, my attitude towards my family became worse. My practice, too, became worse. I began skipping Fife and Drum Corps practices and did gongyo only when I was at a meeting, or my mom was totally on my back. I believed in the Gohonzon, but I just didn't want to do gongyo, chant

DAVID JACKSON, HONOLULU

# Brass Band Efforts Lead to Music Scholarship and New CD

Over the course of my Buddhist practice, I have received so many benefits. But I think my greatest benefits have been connected in some way to music, and I want to share some of them with you.

I am 23 years old and have been a member all my life. Only after I joined the Hawaii King Brass Band when I was 12 did I learn anything about music and playing the trumpet. My mother would take me to practice even though I couldn't stand going. After several weeks, I actually began enjoying practice and attending regularly.

Besides being with good friends, I also loved playing for the members and seeing our music enliven everyone at meetings. Although it was sometimes difficult making it to practices, these activities became a great joy to participate in.

Because of the Brass Band, I gained a good head start for when I took music in the seventh grade and throughout my high school years. The Brass Band has given me so much great training, and I will always appreciate that. The many conventions and culture festivals we participated in will remain golden memories for me.

After high school, I received one of the greatest benefits from my trumpet playing. The University of Hawaii offered me a full music scholarship. I was so happy that all my hard work and practice had paid off. I will be graduating this semester and continuing to play music.

While at school, I received another great benefit. I began playing with a band called Red Session,

a ska band [Jamaican-style dance music]. It was extremely difficult with school, a part-time job and SGI activities to fit in practice time with the band and playing gigs on the weekends. Sometimes I would not get any sleep for two days. As a result, I would get really exhausted and stressed out. I would get really frustrated and down on myself because I could not spend time with friends or meeting people. I just kept chanting and after awhile I really started enjoying the struggles and obstacles and started overcoming them. Now when I see the benefits, I am so glad I didn't give up, especially in playing with the band.



David Jackson

Last summer, our band finished recording our first CD and the response has been really good. From this, we have been on three mainland tours so far. These were great experiences for me, getting to see so many new places and meeting new people.

But what I love most is when I see people enjoying themselves, the music and the dancing. People gathering to share their music communicates so much beyond words. It can instill happiness in people without a word. As SGI President Ikeda wrote in his "Precepts for Brass Band":

"Music is the flower of culture, a language common to the entire world. It is a thing of beauty sought by all people."

I am so grateful to the SGI and President Ikeda for the valuable guidance he has shared. I hope that someday I can make a great contribution toward culture and peace through music. ❖

## Hawaii Fife & Drum Corps 1997 Activity Schedule

<b>June</b>	Fife & Drum Corps Music Bash
<b>August</b>	SGI-USA Music Corps Friendship Exchange at the Florida Nature and Culture Center
<b>September</b>	Annual Aloha Week Parade
<b>October</b>	Fife and Drum Corps Leaders Training Sleep-over Weekend

### Present

Currently, we are preparing for our June Music Bash. This activity will be such a great opportunity for the members to receive training and create precious memories in their lives.

We hold practices, Goshu studies and leaders meetings once a month.

### Future

For the longest time, the members have been wanting to have a brass section in the Fife and Drum Corps, because many of them play brass instruments in their high school bands. So this year, I would like to develop three new sections:

- 1) A brass section
- 2) A dance crew
- 3) A swing-flag corps

By implementing these three new sections into the Fife and Drum Corps, we will have more creativity and diversity in the band. This will also allow us to play much more music than in the past.

— LINDA MAE KLANESKI, Fife and Drum Corps Chief

## Getting Serious About Life and Her Responsibilities in the Fife and Drum Corps

KLANESKI, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

needed to be strong so that I could help them. Helping them to overcome their problems, being there for them, made me happy. It was as if the problems that I was going through in my daily life were so small in comparison.

Through these changes I forged such deep bonds with my members. I made a list with the names of all of my members and every time I chanted, I brought this list out.

Through this, I changed many things. For one, our section was able to grow from only a few, to a whopping 27 strong. It was amazing! My life-condition began to change tremendously, and suddenly I began to actually feel hope for my future. My relationship with the Fife and Drum Corps chief took such a major turn that today we are best friends.

In October 1994, the baton of responsibility as Fife and Drum Corps chief was passed to me. This was a really big step in my life.

Over the past two years I have challenged many difficult times, but I have also gained much benefit! To help any person overcome their sufferings through this practice of Nichiren Daisshonin's Buddhism, and to see them blossom into beautiful flowers is the most gratifying feeling I have ever experienced!

I realize how much I've changed in my life through my practice. Today, my relationship with my mom has improved so much that I no longer feel as though I cannot stay in the same room with her for more than 10 minutes at a time.

I can't even believe how much better we get along! We can talk to each other about so many things very open; I feel as though she is not only my mom



Linda (center) at a Fife and Drum Corps sleepover.

but my friend.

About four years ago, my mom opened her own business, and I've been working with her ever since. And this is such a benefit for me, because before that I never held a job longer than three months at a time. Not only that, but I was financially ruined. I never had any money,

only bills. But now, not only do I get paid well, I also get a lot of fringe benefits.

As for my relationship with my dad, it has improved drastically — so much so, that we can actually have a conversation and laugh about it. I don't fight with my brothers like I used to, and the holes in the doors, well,

they're all gone now.

I've been going to school for about a year and a half. After I get my associates in arts degree in cosmetology, I'll be transferring to the University of Hawaii to major in foreign languages. After that, I want to continue to expand my horizon and further my education.

I feel so much hope for my future. I realize now that it was me, and not my environment, that changed. Because I changed, naturally my environment changed. I feel that this all would not have been possible if it were not for the great training that I received in the Fife and Drum Corps. Though I have changed so much, I have a long ways to go. I will do my best to continue raising as many capable young women for the future of kosen-rufu as I can, so that they too may feel the same true happiness that I feel in my life today! ❖

Photos by KATHY POWLOKA



Hiroki Sugihara, oldest son of Chiune Sugihara.

By IRLENE OWADA

LOUISVILLE, COLO., CORRESPONDENT

Sometimes someone of great courage comes forth to lend a hand in the hour of need. Chiune Sugihara was such a man. When the Nazis in 1940 stepped up their campaign to eliminate the Jews, Sugihara was a Japanese consulate in Lithuania. Daily, hundreds were seeking a way to leave Europe; if they could get out through Lithuania, go to Russia and then Japan, they could get to safety. But they needed one thing — visas. To issue them Sugihara would have to go against the Japanese government.

He tried three times to get permission to issue visas but was refused each time. With great courage he put his job on the line and risked his life and the lives of family members to do what he felt he had to: He began issuing visas, hundreds every day. Before he was removed from his post he had issued more than 6,000.

In a recent lecture in Boulder, Colo., Sugihara's son Hiroki related that his father's goal was to issue 300 a day. This was no easy task — each visa required several long paragraphs to be handwritten. When finally forced to leave in August 1940, Sugihara continued to write visas from his hotel room and even handed out blank ones from the train. As the train pulled out, a lone man's voice cried out, "Sugihara, we will never forget you!"

Rabbi Chanowitz, a Sugihara survivor, was at the lecture to express his gratitude. "It takes but one candle to push away the darkness," he said. One person can make a difference, as Sugihara proved. From the 6,000 people he saved, there are now 40,000 living descendants throughout the world.

WJ

# One Candle



Rabbi Gerson Chanowitz — Sugihara survivor.